



Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee

The mission of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee is to provide oversight for and promote communication between the Board of Supervisors, the Department of Social Services and its related agencies, and the community, with emphasis on providing information and recommendations that make the system more effective and efficient.

MINUTES

October 5, 2022

9:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.

Meeting held In-person with Zoom option

I. Call to order and introductions.

Pam

Meeting called to order by Pamela Hancock at 9:11 AM with roll call by Elizabeth Bell.

II. Approve minutes for **September 7, 2022**.

- Tracy Kashian (District 2) motioned; Rosemary Alanis (District 4) seconded to approve September 7, 2022, meeting minutes.

III. Updates.

A. Legislative Updates.

Elected Official Representative and DSS

- No updates from Elected Official Representative.
- Pam gave a legislative update regarding Education Code 48918.1. The Fresno County Foster Youth Discipline Notification Process will become effective January 1, 2023. When discipline is being taken regarding a Fresno County foster youth, the governing board of the school district shall provide notice of the expulsion hearing to the pupil's attorney and an appropriate representative of the county child welfare agency.

B. Department of Social Services Addressing Critical Areas.

CWS Deputy Directors

- Department is moving forward with the Child Enhancement Work. As of last week, there will be 7 priority work groups that Child Welfare Services (CWS) will be moving forward with immediately. The priorities are Standby, Training & Coaching, Court Improvement Process, Complex Needs Youth, Specialization Review, Quality Parenting and Service Enhancement Communication Efforts.
- CWS has moved forward with all but one work group to discuss what the next step are in addressing each of the priorities for the department.
- Work groups are comprised of internal staff (DSS Staff), staff from other County departments, and community partners.
- A PowerPoint was provided (via email) for attendees that gives an update on the accomplishments and immediate priorities for each work group.
- There are still opportunities for individuals to participate in these work groups. If interested, individuals can reach out to Catherine Huerta (Operations Lead) and Michael Kifer (Project Manager).
- Richard Bailey (District 4) attends the Court Improvement work group and noted that progress is being made.
- Data points were provided (via email) for attendees to look over. It is a continuation of the data that was included in the Annual Report that went to the Board of Supervisors.
- Pam asked Dalvin if the Service Enhancement Work is internal and Dalvin responded that it is cross-collaboration with DSS, Department of Behavioral Health and Probation. These Departments are looking to see how they come together to help service the community and provide interventions to families to avoid entering the system.
- One of the strategies being used for the Child Enhancement Work is the Quality Parent Initiative (QPI). Catherine Huerta is the Operations Lead for the QPI workgroups and said this past week Carole Schaffer and Jennifer Rodriguez from the Youth Law Center met with the DSS Executive and Leadership Staff to discuss what the plans will be to initiate QPI back in Fresno County. Next week will be the start of the focus groups. This is when similar groups come together on a regular basis to discuss what good quality parenting should be for the youth. Barriers and solutions to those barriers are discussed in these focus groups. Next week, 8 groups will start with the majority being internal DSS staff (e.g., Social Workers, supervisors, clerical, and management). Catherine is hopeful to meet with CASA next week and is going to speak with the Foster Parent Association and invite them to one of the focus groups. A focus group session will take place with the court soon.
- QPI Champions was discussed. 14 individuals have volunteered to be a champion. Recently, the QPI Champions attended the National Conference and had an opportunity to interact and meet individuals from all over the United States. Catherine noted QPI is a national movement and 10 states are involved in over 80 different organizations that are actively working on QPI. The QPI Champions are trained every month discussing what quality parenting is and how does it fit in to a Child Welfare Agency. Catherine said every youth in the system deserves quality parenting whether they stay 1 day, 2 days or an

extended period. Group Homes and Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) are not the departments preference when it comes to housing. STRTPs are placements that deal with specific youth in meeting their needs on a short-term basis. The department prefers that children are placed in a relative's home first before moving on to a different placement (in case there are no relatives).

- Kimberli Smith gave an update regarding the Child Enhancement Work. Regarding the Training and Coaching work group, training has been mapped out for Safety Organized Practice, which provides a way of engaging children, family, and the community to be able to support the work that is being done in Child Welfare.
- Cohorts begin this month with a 2-day overview (8 hours each). After the 2-day overview, it will evolve into monthly cohorts. The cohorts allow attendees to view how youth are interviewed and how CWS hosts child and family team meetings. Attendees will also have a chance to learn what is working well or what concerns may be present.

IV. Review of Action Items.

Wilma

A. Vote on Attendance Options for November 2nd Meeting

- Elizabeth Thomas motioned for the November 2nd meeting to continue as a hybrid meeting, with the option of either virtual (Zoom) or in-person; Ari Martinez seconded the motion.

V. Subcommittee Updates.

A. Education

Pam

- Pam distributed the Fresno County Outcome Data: *Children Experiencing Foster Care* handout that included data regarding Foster Graduation, Foster School Stability and Foster Chronic Absenteeism.
- Most of the data came from 49 seniors in Fresno Unified School District. The Fresno County Superintendent of Schools wanted to see if there was a correlation between school moves, school of origin, and graduation outcomes. The findings demonstrated that when there were no school moves, the graduation rate was at 91%. The countywide graduation rate for foster youth is at 48% and the all-student graduation rate is at 81%. Foster Youth is 30% below the all-student graduation rate. There is a significant impact on whether a child is moved, especially during high school. Pam said efforts should be made to support there being no school moves for high school students.
- Fresno Unified will be having a literacy project involving 3rd-6th graders.

B. Children's Mental Health

Wilma

- Link provided for the next Mental Health Subcommittee meeting being held on October 27, 2022 at 9:00 AM: <https://fresnocountyca.webex.com/fresnocountyca/j.php?MTID=m333de268a65ae8f8835e0da724a0b0595>
- Wilma Hashimoto informed meeting attendees that there was a significant decline in the mental health of the intermediate and high school youth during the pandemic. In addition, Valley Children's Hospital is opening over 100 beds for mental wellness patients from children to adults. Approximately 22 beds are reserved for children ages 0-17.

VI. Round Table Discussion by members.

All

- Richard said the numbers that stood out in the court workgroups were report timeliness. FR reports 49-52% timely and PPLA and adoption reports were 16-17% timely. Richard would like reports on every meeting. Richard would also like to see the number of trials set and the number of trials heard.
- Transportation reimbursement was brought up. It could take up to 6 months for parents to be reimbursed, which could lead to barriers. Tracy asked what the total cost is for the extra transportation and Pam responded 700,000 dollars per year.
- Tracy suggested a fundraiser or donation from the community to assist with that number. Brian Van Anne (Transitions Children Services) responded that the Education Travel Reimbursement (ETR) is effective, but there are factors that play a role on how much gets reimbursed, such as milage and how many youths are utilizing it. The State does reimburse, but it takes a long time to get the money, due to the frequent turn over in different school districts.
- Kevin Lisitsin added that some counties have a challenging time paying its months reimbursement. Fresno County does a good job of reimbursing. Kevin would like to know what specific challenges are present that prevents families to receive their reimbursement faster.
- Elizabeth Thomas added that as a Resource Parent, they were told there will be no reimbursement unless the mileage was 12 or more miles driven.
- CWS Deputy Directors will find further information regarding the transportation issue.
- Rosemary Alanis (District 4) believes the issue is training and the assigned case worker. Some workers are very efficient, and some delay the process.
- Kevin believes there should be communication and networking amongst different Foster Family Agencies to find more homes for youth. Sticking to one Foster Care program creates limited opportunities to find an appropriate home for a youth.
- Brian agrees with Kevin that there should be support amongst various FFAs when it comes to placing children, instead having competitiveness between different FFAs.

- Dalvin does not believe the ETR is the biggest concern but does acknowledge there are placements missed.
- Richard would like to know the process used that ensures the social workers are handling how to match youth that are being moved with placement resources.
- Josh Lawson (Via Zoom) suggested that the level of care may be a better model for reimbursement of the added driving rather than a mileage reimbursement.
- Brian added that the California Alliance is working with the State Department of Social Services on 5 different rate groups at the State level. One of the things being addressed as an Alliance is that there is no money in the rate for supervising visitation or transportation to visitation. The State recognizes that as the County's responsibility. Brian is advocating for changing reimbursement rates. Catherine said that she supports the advocacy since this has been addressed for 9 years.
- Catherine clarified that the social worker is responsible for every placement. Placement decisions are not made by anybody else without the expressed permission of the social worker. Partnership with agencies does occur, but the Social Worker does sign-off on the placement of youth.

VII. Public Comments.

- None

VIII. Adjourn.

Pam

Next meeting will be on November 2nd, 2022, in-person and virtually via Zoom. Meeting adjourned by Pam at 10:28 AM.

Committee Attendance

District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5
		<input type="checkbox"/> Sal Quintero <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ari Martinez (Proxy)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Karina Perez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kevin Lisitsin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James Martinez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rosemary Alanis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pamela Hancock
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wendy Yribarren	<input type="checkbox"/> Maisie Young	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Thomas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richard Bailey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ed Avila
<input type="checkbox"/> Jill Stepke	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy Kashian	<input type="checkbox"/> Patricia Miller	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Connie Waldrop - Zoom	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wilma Hashimoto - Zoom

Attending Staff and Guests

Catherine Huerta, Kim Smith, Dalvin Baker, Elizabeth Bell, Julia Perez, Hillary Bolger, Karel Gonzalez (Zoom), Brian Van Anne, Miriam Flores (Zoom), Focus Forward (Zoom), Pat Scovill, Rebakah (Zoom), Judge Mary Dolas (Zoom), Sanja Bugay (Zoom), Ron Alexander (Zoom), David Rodriguez (Zoom), Josh Lawson (Zoom), Sonja Dosti (Zoom)